

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Public Hearing

Monday – February 9, 2008 – 7:00 p.m.

A public hearing was held on Monday, February 9, 2009, at 7:00 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine, in the Commission Hearing Room. Administrative Assistant Candice Richards was present to record the minutes of the meeting.

Commission members present were: Anne Beebe-Center, Commissioner District #1, Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2 and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3. County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, EMA Director Ray Sisk, Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, and EMA Clerk Donna Allen.

Media representatives in attendance: Kim Lincoln from the *Herald Gazette*.

Also present were: Roger Lichtman of Lichtman Associates, Ken Schiano and Paula Beall of QA13, Chris Shrum of EMDC, Normand Laberge of Tidewalker Associates, Carrie Adams of the Rockland EMS, and Chris Knight of the Camden First Aid.

Commission Chair Anne Beebe-Center started the meeting at 7:00 p.m..

I. **Introductions and Background Information.**

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center explained that this meeting was the first of several informational meetings with the public about Knox County's space needs. The presentation by QA13 / Lichtman Associates is a preliminary study of the space needs. She stated that she would like to ask members of the public to ask questions and to introduce themselves when they speak. She stated that County Administrator Andrew Hart would give some background information for the needs assessment process and how it all came to be.

County Administrator Andrew Hart stated that he would go into more detail than he had at the meeting held at 3 pm. He gave an overview of the history of the previous county actions which led to the current Space Utilization and Needs Assessment. The following information was spoken nearly verbatim:

- July 1, 1999 – Rockland Communications and Knox County Communications combined to form a new PSAP which was located in the Rockland Fire Station on a temporary basis while a plan was developed to build an addition onto the County's Law Enforcement facility to house the new PSAP.
- November 1999 – the County went out to referendum for a bond to build onto the existing law enforcement facility to house the new PSAP. The bond failed.
- January 2000 – the County hired Linwood Lothrop as the Communications Director. The communications equipment and dispatchers moved into the County's Law Enforcement Center as home to the new PSAP. The Dispatch Advisory Board was established, along with by-laws to develop guidelines and plans for the future of the PSAP. This was understood to be a temporary accommodation for Communications, while plans were to be developed and funds set aside for a new facility to house the PSAP. It was understood that this would probably take between 7 and 10 years. Director Lothrop requested funds each year during the budget process to be put in reserves for the future needs of the Communications Center. Realistic funding for building a Communications Center never materialized.
- The Jail Study Committee was reactivated and held meetings in 2007 in an effort to find alternative options to deal with the issue of overcrowding at the jail and the high costs associated with the boarding out of inmates.
 - The County budgeted \$125,000 for inmate boarding out costs in 2005.
 - The County budgeted \$325,000 for inmate boarding out costs in 2006.
 - The County budgeted \$300,000 for inmate boarding out costs in 2007.
- The Jail Study Committee concluded that the Jail could not perform its function because of the overcrowding, which was due in part to the Patrol Division and Communications Department being housed within the jail facility. Efforts to gain a variance to house additional inmates at the jail to reduce the boarding out costs were successful. This was only a temporary solution because the variance will expire on May 6, 2009, and plans for a permanent solution had to be developed or the variance would be revoked.

- The Jail Study Committee recommended that the Patrol Division and the Communications Department be moved out of the Law Enforcement Facility and that the vacated space be renovated to meet the needs of the jail only. During the basic cost review of the jail renovations, it was suggested that if the County could find a new home in an existing building, for Patrol and Communications, that there could be some savings for jail operations. This was part of the solution to the overcrowding at the jail and the high costs associated with boarding out inmates.
- The County started looking at local facilities because the operations of both Patrol and Communications should remain in the shire town of the County (Rockland). The MBNA property on Old County Road, the former DHS building on Old County Road, and the MDOT building on Rankin Street were reviewed as alternative sites to house Patrol and Communications. The Emergency Management Agency, which is currently located in the Courthouse, joined in the review of locations because it was becoming apparent that Dispatch services and services provided by EMA were closely linked and would serve the residents better if the departments were housed within the same facility. EMA has also had access to grant funding and that might be an additional possibility for funding for a new joint facility.
- It should be noted that the driving force for looking for a new facility was the overcrowding at the jail and the cramped space allotted to Communications. Director Lothrop put off purchasing some equipment and upgrades because of the costs for removing and then moving of the equipment to a new facility.
- The conclusion was that the former DHS building at 360 Old County Road would be the best fit for the three departments. This option was reviewed as well as 5 other options during the 2008 Budget Process. The Commission and the Budget Committee agreed to fund the lease/purchase of the former DHS building option. A Public Hearing was held on this option. Some of the end-users, such as fire departments and EMS were not convinced it was the best solution. The end result was that the County walked away from the lease/purchase option on the Old County Road property.
- Finding a solution to the overcrowding still remains. The County has to move forward to find a solution. One suggestion from those present at the Public Hearing was to do an actual space needs assessment for the three departments before looking at buildings in which to put them.
- The Knox County Commission approved going out to bid for a Space Utilization and Needs Assessment on August 12, 2008. The two bids (one from SMRT and one from QA13 / Lichtman Associates) were opened a month later on September 15th. After interviewing representatives from each firm on October 3rd, Q-A13 / Lichtman Associates were awarded the bid on October 14, 2008. Since then, a lot of research has been done to determine the exact needs of the Communications, Patrol, and EMA departments. QA13 and Lichtman Associates representatives are here tonight to report on their findings.

County Administrator Andrew Hart turned the remainder of the time over to Ken Schiano of QA13.

II. Presentation by QA13

Ken Schiano stated that he is a partner in QA13 Architects from Bangor, Maine. QA13 has been in business since 1986 and they have done a lot of work in the state. Paula Beall is his partner. Mr. Schiano stated that Roger Lichtman of Lichtman Associates was also present at the meeting. He stated that Lichtman Associates does consulting all over the world in terms of designing for various justice facilities, such as prisons and other correctional facilities. They design facilities globally. Lichtman Associates also work with a team member not present at this meeting, named Jim Robertson. Mr. Robertson is from Denver, Colorado and has been a consultant for various agencies for justice services. He has experience as someone who has worked as a corrections officer and has been an invaluable asset to the process. Mr. Schiano stated that Norman Laberge was also present at the meeting. Mr. Laberge is a civil engineer owns an engineering firm called Tidewalker Associates located in Trescott, Maine. Mr. Laberge specializes in environmental assessment, hazardous materials, mitigation issues, and promote alternative energy sources.

Mr. Schiano stated that he and his team had been hired to do a space utilization and needs assessment. He stated that he wanted to explain what that meant and where they were in the scope of the whole process. He stated that the project is in the basic initial phase, or what you could call the program development phase. Mr. Schiano stated that they had been asked to examine the three

agencies in a series of assessments that would provide the County with the material to move forward to the next stage, which might include studying site issues. The County would eventually do a site selection and begin work on schematic design. The process is not at that stage yet. Instead, QA13 / Lichtman Associates is doing program development, looking at the agencies and seeing what their needs are, see what is missing, what is working, what is not working, both in terms of the facility and their operations. Then the County will be provided with a report that describes where the needs and deficiencies are. The second task will be to provide the County with a series of options that can then be discussed to decide what the next step is and how far the County wants to go with this process.

Mr. Schiano stated that in terms of what was going to be shown as part of the presentation, there are some things that will not be shown. There are no architectural designs and nothing will be shown that is beyond the planning stage, or possible sites or options for construction. The presentation will only show what has been discovered so far during the preliminary assessment of the needs for the three agencies.

Mr. Schiano explained that the presentation would follow this agenda:

Presentation by QA13 / Lichtman Associates

1. Photos of the existing areas by component – current conditions
2. Program space lists – identified needs
3. Needs vs. existing space allocations
4. Site drawing and analysis with existing condition site photos
5. Options and concepts – potential solutions
6. Question/Answer Discussion

Paula Beall stated that the photos in the presentation are just a few of the many taken. The pictures were being shown to let everyone see just some of the issues in each of the different agencies. The first set of pictures showed the Emergency Management department. One of the big issues is the main room used by the agency. There is not enough space for the number of people who need to meet in the room. There are storage issues. The EMA clerk's work area is located in this room, so if there is a meeting going on, it is hard for her to get her work done. The EMA dispatch console and HAM radio area is too small, with storage, ventilation, heat, and acoustics issues. To get to the kitchen, you have to walk through the Director's office. There is no general storage space. The staff has had to find spaces in every room to put stuff.

The next set of pictures were from the Communications/Dispatch area. This department also has no space. There are now four dispatch consoles in the room. There are security issues with the windows being near the jail. Inmates who are released will walk right past the unsecured windows. There are heating, ventilation, and fire suppression issues. The room is so hot from all the equipment that an air conditioning unit is running, which creates background noise and makes it hard for the dispatchers to hear while on the phone. The supervisors for dispatch have to use the recording equipment that is in the director's office, which makes it hard for Director Lothrop to use his own office space. The equipment itself is ten years old and was supposed to be ergonomic, but it is not working properly anymore. There are storage issues everywhere. Cabling and wiring has been put wherever it could be. If someone were to climb the access ladder up to roof and trip, they could accidentally take out the cables. It would take out the 9-1-1 capability until someone could fix it. The wiring is all in very vulnerable positions. There are also water pipes near the wiring. In one area the wiring was already coming off of the wall and it would not take much for it to be accidentally pulled down completely.

Ms. Beall showed some photographs of the IT room at the Sheriff's Department and the 9-1-1 room. It is not so much an actual room as it is just a space where all the IT equipment is located. There is no actual work space for the IT staff to be able to go in and work on the equipment. The wiring is spilling out of the wall and the ceiling. In the 9-1-1 equipment room, it used to be the lab for the Sheriff's Office so there is plumbing that has been capped off and there is also electrical equipment. If a pipe breaks in there, the electrical equipment would all be lost. There is no adequate ventilation. There are storage issues. The training room in the Sheriff's Department, which is shared with Dispatch, is being used for storage so there is not much room to do training. There is even storage in the women's locker room, including file cabinets. The chief deputy's office is actually a portion of the hallway leading from the Sheriff's Office into the jail. His office also doubles as a small conference room. There were more photos that showed storage issues, including storage that ended up in the men's locker rooms and bathrooms. All of the agencies have problems with ADA compliance. Nothing is up to code. The office supplies for dispatch are in Director Lothrop's office. There are more storage issues in the IT room.

Mr. Lichtman stated that the pictures show the equivalent of ten pounds of fertilizer in a five-pound bag. The staff should be commended for doing such a good job in the small amount of space they have to work in. This will only work for so long. If someone in an emergency dials 9-1-1 and no one responds, that is a very serious problem. Mr. Lichtman stated that the first thing that QA13 /

Lichtman Associates did was go to each department and ask what they would want for space if they could have whatever they wanted. Working together with the department heads, this was cut back to see what was the minimal amount of space and bare necessities needed to make the system function. Numbers were then developed to show the amount of existing space, and the amount of new space needed. The numbers were broken down into net square feet, net occupied/occupiable square feet, and gross square feet. Net square feet is the space that is required to house that function. The net occupiable square feet gives the circulation within each of those components. When the components are all added together, including wall thickness, mechanical and electrical spaces, you end up with the gross square feet. It came out to be 30,631 total gross square feet that is required for all three departments put together.

Ms. Beall showed three different space layouts, one for each department. Each showed the existing space currently occupied and used by each department, and also showed how much more space is actually needed in addition to the existing space. There is currently no EOC or training space.

Mr. Lichtman stated that their task was not to go out and select sites, but an analysis was done to determine what 30,361 square footage looks like, to see where it could fit, and what the options are. He showed an aerial view map that marked off a radius of a half mile, one mile, and one and a half miles from the jail. He also showed a map of the State of Maine which showed a radius of ten miles, twenty miles, and thirty miles. He stated that the question is, if the County is going to select a site, how far out is the County willing to go? This is a decision that the County would have to make. He stated that for their task and for the purpose of their report, they focused on the jail site because it is already county property and there needed to be a control site to compare other sites to. He added that it was not part of the needs assessment task to identify sites. The only real problem with the jail site is that we cannot build anywhere on the site that might prevent future expansion of the jail itself.

Mr. Lichtman stated that it was not QA13 / Lichtman Associates' task to set priorities but to identify what the needs are. It was also to work with the Commission and the department heads to determine the priorities of what needs to be done and when. One option might be to construct a three-story building on the jail site. If the Sheriff's Office and Communications move out of the jail, the jail administration could spread out into those spaces and relieve their own crowding. The first floor of the new building could have EOC training space and allow for public meetings and other training. The second floor could have the Sheriff's Office and the third, most secure floor, could house Communications. Other options might be to do the construction in phases. For example, building it one floor at a time and moving the departments based on which has the most space needs. These are all things that the County will have to consider after the needs assessment is finished.

Mr. Lichtman stated that if everything was to be done in one phase, it will cost somewhere around \$9 million dollars. He added that this was not what was being proposed because it is not yet determined what the phases are and what gets built first. Mr. Lichtman showed a timeline for the next year. There would be about ten months before the County could go out to bid. Then there would be somewhere between twelve and eighteen months of construction.

Mr. Lichtman stated that at the end of the space needs assessment, there are four things that need to happen. The first is site selection and analysis. The second is setting priorities. What is it that the County wants to accomplish? What can the County afford to do? In terms of paying for the project, a certain amount will be done through bond, but there is also a great potential for a number of grants. Chris Shrum is already analyzing the potential for grants. Three, once the County determines what the priorities are and what kind of project will be done, it will be possible to figure out how much it is going to cost. The unknown will be how much funding will be available and possible to obtain. Four, design infrastructure based on the needs.

Mr. Lichtman asked if there were any questions.

EMA Director Ray Sisk asked what percentage the currently occupied space is of the total needed space. Was it 150 percent? 200 percent?

Mr. Lichtman stated that the problem with what is existing is that it is not contiguous space. It is pieces of space scattered throughout the building.

Mr. Schiano stated that the three agencies currently occupy about 10,000 square feet, while the total needed square footage is about 30,000. If you remove the EOC, which does not currently exist, from the needed 30,000 square feet, you double the square footage for the three agencies.

Communications Director Linwood Lothrop stated that another key point is that the 30,000 square footage increase would solve the space needs of the three departments for the next twenty years.

Mr. Lichtman stated that he agreed. He added that the space will be used now, but even though it will solve the needs for the next couple decades, it does not mean that the space will lie vacant for a period of time.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center asked if there were any further thoughts or questions. She commented that this will be the first of a number of public informational meetings and there will be other opportunities to ask questions and share concerns.

Director Sisk asked how this study compliments and works with the study done by SMRT.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that each time a study was done there was something different was driving it. The SMRT study was done because of the overcrowding of the jail and the high costs of boarding out prisoners. She stated that she did not think that there was that much similar between the two studies. In terms of public safety, the County needs to make some choices and explore some options.

Director Sisk asked if the site was chosen is the jail site, would this also solve some of the space problems that the jail is having?

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that it is still unknown how the jail is going to be structured in the future. It will depend in part on what the state decides to do with the jail. It could end up being a 48 or 72 hour holding space.

Commissioner Richard Parent asked if the jail variance needed to be renegotiated in September. He asked if Administrator Hart had any idea how that will go.

County Administrator Andrew Hart stated that the variance runs out in May of this year. The Board of Corrections is still trying to decide what will happen with each of the jails. There is no indication that the Knox County jail will be changed. It might stay the same or be changed to a holding facility. He added that he believed that the variance would continue until a decision is made. The DOC has yet to approve all of the jail budgets.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that another reason the jail has not had so many boarders is because of all the programs that the County has in place, such as the Restorative Justice program and Maine Pretrial Services.

Commissioner Roger Moody asked if the variance allows the jail to hold more inmates than it otherwise would be allowed to.

County Administrator Andrew Hart stated that this was correct. The variance allowed the jail to hold 80 inmates, instead of 56.

Commissioner Richard Parent asked what the next step would be.

County Administrator Andrew Hart stated that QA13 and Lichtman Associates will do a final report, which will be presented to the Commission. Then the Commission will decide what to do next, which may be to look at sites and schematics. Statues now state that any new construction by the County has to be done within the County seat, unless voters in all municipalities in the County approve it being located in a town other than the County seat.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center stated that the County has to look at priorities in terms of public safety.

County Administrator Andrew Hart stated that the other thing to keep in mind is finding funding and seeing what is out there for funding options.

Commissioner Roger Moody asked when the final report would be available since the needs assessment is about 90 percent completed.

Mr. Lichtman stated that he believed it would be completed within the next month. He stated that 90% of the information from the report was relayed as part of the presentation. There will be a lot more detail included in the final report.

Ms. Beall stated that she wanted to respond to Director Sisk's earlier question about if the removal of the Sheriff's Office and Communications would solve any space problems for the jail itself. She stated that it would solve space problems at the jail because the jail administration would then be able to move into the spaces vacated by the other two departments. It would not solve the inmate

population crowding but the jail staff space problems. Even though the jail was not a part of this study, whatever the Commission decides to do will ultimately have an affect on the jail itself.

III. Adjourn

- Commissioner Richard Parent motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Roger Moody seconded the motion. There was a vote taken with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting
held on March 10, 2009.**

Anne H. Beebe-Center, Chair – Commissioner District #1

Richard L. Parent, Jr. – Commissioner District #2

Roger A. Moody – Commissioner District #3